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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/04/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BO](#)
SUBJECT: BELARUSIAN YOUTH ON TRIAL: REGIME LIGHT ON
ACCUSED, TOUGH ON SUPPORTERS

REF: A. MINSK 724
[1](#)B. MINSK 747
[1](#)C. MINSK 457

Classified By: Ambassador Karen Stewart for reason 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Embassy Minsk sent poloffs to separate trials of two Malady Front (MF) activists September 4 (refs A and B). In Nesvizh, the judge found Anastasiya Azarka guilty of acting on behalf of an unregistered organization (Article 193), and sentenced her to a USD 572 fine. The Slovak DCM, representing the EU Presidency in Minsk, attended part of the trial, as did poloff and about 50 local supporters, including Malady Front founder Pavel Severinets and "For Freedom" movement Deputy Chair Yuriy Gubarevich.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In Soligorsk, the prosecutor asked for a conviction, but no punishment for sixteen-year-old Ivan Shilo. Right before the trial, at least two dozen protesters outside the courthouse held up banners in support of Malady Front and Shilo. OMON troops forcefully detained up to 15 of the activists. According to unconfirmed reports one protestor was briefly hospitalized. Five adults, including MF Chair Dmitriy Fedaruk (ref B) will face trial on administrative charges September 5. United Civic Front Head Anatoliy Lebedko, Belarusian National Front Head Vintsuk Vyachorka, Amnesty International representatives and a poloff were among the roughly 80 attendees. Police checkpoints on the road from Minsk delayed other observers from reaching the courthouse in time.

Comment: Purposely Avoiding More Political Prisoners?

[1](#)3. (C) When the last major Malady Front trial (ref C) ended in fines rather than jail time, most observers credited international pressure -- including EUR DAS Kramer's discussions with GOB officials in April -- with the "lenient" sentences. The GOB may have decided its campaign of incessant low-level repression -- fines, short-term detentions, extraneous shoves and kicks -- will keep Malady Front small in size without resulting in tangible international repercussions.
Stewart